

MAYOR'S YOUTH COUNCIL



Mayor's Youth Council '25 - '26

FINAL REPORT

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Mayor's Youth Council Overview

The Boston Mayor's Youth Council (MYC) is a citywide program designed to empower and engage the young people of Boston in civic leadership and community development. MYC aims to bridge the gap between City government and youth, ensuring that young residents have a direct impact on the decisions that affect their lives. The Council provides a platform for youth to voice their opinions, collaborate with City officials, and develop solutions to the challenges facing young people across the City of Boston.

During the 2025 - 2026 council year term, the Mayor's Youth Council continued hosting city-wide town halls, a staple of the program. These gatherings give the council members insight into the broader youth experience in Boston and allows their peers to provide suggestions on how to improve upon it. To ensure optimal youth engagement, the council split up into 4 groups and hosted their town halls at easily accessible locations throughout different neighborhoods across Boston including East Boston, Downtown, South End, and the North End. A key aspect of facilitating productive and open conversations is building an inclusive and collaborative environment that youth feel comfortable in. To achieve this, the

council leaned on OYEA's existing partner network to invite local youth serving-organizations to each of the town halls. Moreover, the youth developed engaging feedback collection mechanisms utilizing ideas like interactive games and storytelling.

As the events got started, the groups established different stations in order to get a stronger understanding of the youth's beliefs and preferences toward different issues and questions. Each station had poster papers with questions and sticky notes attached that gave room for youth to write down their opinion --- ensuring that they were heard. A MYC member from each group manned each poster and handed out prize tickets for a raffle later in the town hall, which encouraged attendees to answer the questions. The groups additionally led games with their town halls as an ice breaker to increase the friendly atmosphere. The groups' overall goals heading into the town hall were to identify actionable issues common among youth in Boston; create a greater awareness of city government resources; and foster critical thinking.

The town halls identified several similar concerns of Boston's youth. These included: third spaces, preparation help for college, means for a cleaner city, and the importance of making more affordable youth activities, as well as a general expressed concern for the cost of living crisis in Boston. One participant said "I attend community events in my South End community center, but I would want to attend more". Youth primarily felt as though they could get support mostly from their family, school staff, peers, and community institutions. All youth surveyed noted disparities in funding and resources between neighborhoods, such as Roxbury and East Boston vs. Downtown. "When I go to other neighborhoods the difference is crazy", one participant noted. Several groups focused on questions regarding education, public safety, and health. Within these sectors, groups saw that many youth, especially young women in Boston don't feel safe walking at night, and expressed concerns with streets, such as lack of street lights and crosswalks. Across all town halls, youth stated that there is a lack of youth job opportunities in the city, both during the summer and school-year seasons. The valuable feedback received from over 80 of their youth constituents shaped their initiative projects aimed at remedying concerns and increasing opportunities and accessibility for youth in Boston.

Key Findings

- Mayor's Youth Councilors found gaps in communication and awareness of relevant issues pertaining to youth such as available programs, resources, and events.
- Council members aimed to remedy several of these gaps through youth accessible communication for small businesses and the Boston Family Days Program, however more intentional efforts are still required.
- Youth requested various academic resources such as tutoring and Professional Development to be incorporated into the BPS structure.
- Youth mentioned disparities in access to resources depending on their neighborhood as well as safety differing greatly.

Initiative Phase Introduction

Incorporating feedback from the town halls, the youth created four initiative committees focused on supporting specific aspects of the youth experience. Three of these committees created partnerships with existing programs within the City of Boston in order to increase youth influence and ensure engagement. The Boston Family Days (BFD) committee addressed the issue of teen participation through increasing awareness for the program by creating accessible "third spaces" and events that appealed to teens at the various BFD institutions. The Streets Committee created a webpage designed to educate young people about available resources that they can use to advocate for accessibility and street safety in their communities. The Small Business Committee highlighted youth accessible local businesses in an effort to increase youth patronage through offering third spaces and teen-focused social media content. Finally, The Second Minute Boston committee focused on addressing safety concerns of Boston youth through the creation of a violence response protocol that could be standardized across public health spaces, including community centers, schools, or other locations where youth are concentrated. All four committees maintained the intention to ensure their work was for the betterment of the youth experience in Boston and collaborated with numerous partners to make this happen.

Boston Family Days Committee

With the support of Robert Davis Awkward, Program Manager of Boston Family Days, the BFD committee focused on bridging the gap between city institutions and BPS high schoolers by executing targeted social media campaigns, and creating tailored teen events to increase engagement within the program. In order to create outreach on these events, the committee created appealing videos using recent trends and music, and used online platforms such as Instagram to ensure it reached more young people and shared information about these events. Beyond digital outreach, the committee engaged in strategic networking with local youth organizations and partnerships with institutions like the MFA and Museum of Science to host events specifically tailored to teen interests. The BFD committee also created flyers and sent these flyers around, posting them on social media, at schools, community centers, and bulletin boards. They hosted two teen events across the City of Boston. The first one was called “Jump Into the Past”, an event hosted at the Museum of African American History, to celebrate Black History Month on February 1st, 2026, including a museum scavenger hunt, music, and so much more. The second event they hosted was called “Teen Celebration” at the Museum of Fine Arts, an event full of celebration, including art exhibits, free converse, hands on crafts, music, and more. By focusing on the high-stress areas of youth life today, the committee worked to promote youth engagement, creating environments and third-spaces where Boston’s teens feel prioritized, welcomed, and empowered, without any worries.

Across the two Boston Family Days events, MYC was able to bring in over 50 youth/teens to the cultural institutions and engage them through intentional programming. This focus is vital in ensuring continued participation at these sites after creating a welcoming environment that has the potential to be a third-space for some teens. Throughout the events, feedback was primarily positive and supportive of the programming as teens felt they belonged in the space. Moreover, youth felt the scavenger hunts at each allowed them to engage with the exhibits in an exciting and inquisitive fashion. One potential barrier noted at both sites was the accessibility and ease of arrival. The Museum of African American History is located in an elevated area that may be difficult to get to for some, especially on the date selected as freezing temperatures and wind inhibited attendance. Similarly, the registration process at the MFA caused confusion amongst youth who did not have it completed prior to attending, resulting in a slightly lower turnout.

Streets Committee

The Streets Committee expanded on the work they did during the 2024 - 2025 council year and focused on making the City's street services more accessible through an informational guide and social media post, which outlines how to file requests for infrastructure improvements in the City. During the Committee's meetings throughout the fall and winter, they noticed that different resources were often muddled in multiple different departments and there was no centralized space with information on how citizens can engage with street infrastructure. That is why – with the vital support of Dolores Carbona in the Streets Cabinet – the Committee created an info page, *Youth Guide to Street Services*, which condenses different forms of scattered information within a centralized guide to help citizens navigate through the processes that involve public services.

The Committee got started with the project by drafting the required processes for the web page via a google document. Here, things are then split into four phases: research, drafts, revision, and execution. During the research phase, they identified important departments, committees, and stakeholders that are involved within the Public Service departments, in order to get a rough understanding of the current navigation process. From there, they used what they learned and compressed the information into an easy to read summary for what people need to know about Streets policy in Boston. The Committee included FAQs and links to useful resources on the City of Boston website for residents to reference. Finally, they were able, with the help of Ms. Carbona and other City workers, to publish the page, boston.gov/youth-streets, after multiple rounds of revisions and checking-in sessions with OYEA Communications and Outreach Manager Maya Bravo.

The Committee hopes that with the initiative of the Street Committee, there will be a push for a more organized system within the City Departments and City of Boston website. They also urge for strong prioritization of accessibility that would allow residents to easily navigate the website for resources. Moreover, they acknowledge the need for more resources into the Department of Public Work so that Boston will be able to meet the legal standard of the City Curb Ramps ADA Compliant as this reflects Boston's priority—it is a city that gives equal means for all.

Second Minute Committee

The Second Minute Committee was formed in response to town hall feedback where many youth participants either voted for or said that they don't feel safe in Boston and such sentiment constituted nearly half of the responses. Other feedback included having few hospitals nearby, lacking emotional safety support, and environmental factors. Ultimately, these varying lived experiences shine light on the lack of widespread safety in our city. As one youth reflected: "Violence depends on the place you are in." Such sentiment calls for a level of standardization of violence responses across spaces where youth may gather. By doing so, community centers, third spaces, and other public locations in the city can be better equipped and prepared to respond to violent incidents – helping to keep youth safe.

The Committee's project was organized into four main phases: town hall data collection, interviewing community leaders and specialists, protocol-drafting, and finally distribution. Through their research, in addition to meetings with mental health professionals, Boston Public Schools (BPS) and Boston Police Department (BPD) councilors, and a leader from the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, they identified that a post-violence guide with physical and mental health considerations would be helpful in communities. As such, the committee structured their project around creating this resource to best support youth around Boston.

The protocol document is composed of the following general sections: project overview and background information, why the topic matters, situation assessment, continued support, and emergency/crisis support. Together, they form a comprehensive packet that can be used both for post-violence response as well as general outreach and support.

The Committee ultimately recommends that this resource is made available to all organizations including BPS, BPD, Boston Centers for Youth and Families, non-governmental organizations, and other related community centers where youth are involved across the city.

Small Business Committee

From the town halls, the members of the Small Businesses Initiative all identified three major areas of improvement when it comes to how youth interact with small businesses: accessibility, existing opportunities, and available knowledge. As such, we wanted to address each one of those problems in a different subset of our group by opening more small businesses to youth, particularly through events

and spaces which have historically excluded youth; working with small businesses to allow youth to intern at their establishments and gain skills in specialized trades, focus pertaining to businesses that do work which requires advanced education; and crafting an ad campaign to ensure that small businesses across the city are known and accessible to youth. For the first, we worked on presentations for businesses that host events like trivia nights or have restrictions on age past a certain hour in order to try and convince them to find time for youth to use these spaces, ensuring that the adolescent population has activities they can rely on while not in school or at work. Our second idea hoped to benefit not only the youth, but businesses as well. By finding avenues for these young people into small businesses, the youth would gain valuable work experience in industry, bolstering the strength of their resume, while the business would get labor they didn't have to pay for. This payment would come via the SuccessLink program and a connecting nonprofit youth job placement agency. Finally, we wished to provide a resource for youth to identify additional third spaces where they could spend time with friends, study, or explore neighborhoods in Boston, all while promoting a healthy economy. Our committee recommends continued youth partnership with the Office of Economic Opportunity & Inclusion to further progress the first two initiatives: Teen-centered events at small businesses and increased internship and job opportunities. These areas are critical for sustainable growth and engagement between the youth of Boston and the local businesses that support them.

Recommendations

Through engaging youth across Boston and maneuvering within the existing city infrastructure related to youth opportunity, the Mayor's Youth Council has developed several recommendations. The council feels strongly about implementing city-wide academic resources and professional development. Learning must be fostered beyond the classroom; thus, the council believes that SAT prep, tutoring, and job fairs would be critical to youth development and indispensable to the professional world. Furthermore, requests for additional academic and professional resources, such as tutoring, college and postsecondary pathway counseling, networking opportunities, and workforce readiness training, were frequently raised in the MYC Town Halls, making it clear that the current opportunities do not meet young people's needs.

Additionally, as youth councilors, the MYC feels strongly about the equity of these city-wide programs. The neighborhood or location must not impede youth engagement. Especially during major city decisions, the City should facilitate youth panels and participation regarding projects or developments that will directly impact them. In recent years, Boston youth have had the opportunity to interact with the city government through select departments such as the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement and Youth Employment and Opportunity. The City should increase opportunities for young people to interact and get involved with more departments, such as the Boston Streets Cabinet, the Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, and the Office of Parks and Recreation. This would greatly benefit Boston's youth by expanding opportunities in education, civic engagement, and community leadership.

Finally, the council noted that youth attendees at town halls and other events with public comment often requested or suggested introducing initiatives and resources that already exist. For this reason, it is extremely important that more resources are invested into publicizing the youth events and opportunities that currently exist, as it is clear that they are beneficial, but unable to affect young people who are unaware of their existence.